

Director Emile Gaudreault (*Mambo Italiano*, *Surviving My Mother*) brought Lauzon on board to co-write *De père en flic*, a comedy about a father-son cop team featuring two of Quebec's most popular actors: Michel Côté of the *Cruising Bar* films and Louis-José Houde of *Bon Cop, Bad Cop*. The title plays on the French phrase for "from father to son," with "flic" (cop) replacing "fils" (son). The Vivafilm release pulled in \$7.9 million in the five weeks following its July 8 opening, and is the front-runner for Canadian film of the year.

Producer Robert, who hopes for an English-Canadian release for *De père*, says the secret of Lauzon's newfound success is simply that "he's a very talented writer," adding, "He's always open to discussing things, and pushes himself to go farther."

Lauzon is more humble, explaining, "I have a great agent [Nathalie Brunet] who believes in me and introduced me to the right people." •

BY MARC GLASSMAN

Age: 36

Residence: Toronto

Agency: None

Buzz: Filmmaker looks to make a splash at TIFF with the Patricia Clarkson-starrer *Cairo Time* as she ramps up for production on the thriller *An October Gale*

"I come from making short films that cost me \$500," says Ruba Nadda, director of the romantic drama *Cairo Time*. "Now I'm making multimillion-dollar films. I don't want to waste anybody's money or waste anybody's time. *Cairo Time* will be around for a long time, so I want to make sure I feel 100% about it."

Well, apparently TIFF feels 100% about it, as it has awarded the film a Special Presentation screening in the fest's opening weekend, ahead of an Oct. 9 domestic release through Mongrel Media.

International sales agent E1 Entertainment has already sold the film in territories including Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East.

It's a long way from her early 20s, when Nadda progressed from writing stories for literary journals to self-financing more than a dozen shorts that would go on to screen in over 200 festivals around the world. Her debut feature *Sabah*, starring Arsinée Khanjian, told of a cross-cultural romance, not unlike the plot of *Cairo Time*. It was executive produced by Atom Egoyan, garnered good reviews, and played in more than 30 countries.

But success in the movie biz can be fleeting. Nadda took stock and began working on a script about married, middle-aged Juliette (played in the film by Patricia Clarkson) traveling in Egypt

and wanting to rekindle romance in her life — which she does, with Tareq (Alexander Siddig). "I was in limbo professionally," Nadda explains. "I had a successful movie but I was forced to go back to work at terrible jobs. I was sad and out of sorts. I took that feeling and put it into Juliette."

Once she finished the script, Nadda took it to Egoyan, "who told me it was going to be a difficult, challenging movie to make. He said there were two producers who could pull it off: Danny Iron [*Away from Her*] and Christine Vachon [*I'm Not There*]. And I got 'em both."

The \$4 million film is a copro between Iron's Foundry Films and David Collins of Ireland's Samson Films. Killer Films' Vachon and Charles Pugliese are EPs.

Nadda remained assured of her vision, even when dealing with Oscar nominee Clarkson. "I told her that Juliette has to be played with restraint: she's never fallen in love like this before. It had to be unexpected," says Nadda. "The kind of director I am, I'm not afraid. I know what I want. If someone has a better idea than mine, I'll go for it."

She has a fan in mentor Egoyan.

"Ruba is an astute and highly sensitive writer, with extraordinary enthusiasm and drive," says Egoyan. "Her direction on *Sabah* was remarkable, with the performances clearly driving the story. Ruba's developed a thick skin — absolutely essential for success — and a passion to tell her story. How can you not succeed with all of these qualities?"

Nadda won't hazard to guess whether *Cairo Time* will be a hit. "You can't ever figure out what's going to be a moneymaker," she admits. "What you can fall back on is telling the best story you can."

And she looks to be doing that again this fall, when, with Iron producing, she will shoot another one of her stories, the thriller *An October Gale*, in Northern Ontario's Georgian Bay. •



RUBA NADDA WRITER DIRECTOR